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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Der Naomi

Thank you for your letter of 5 April about local solutions to traffic congestion in Newtown.

Last October we announced new plans to ease transport congestion in Newtown, having held a public consultation and taken into consideration the comments received from members of the public. The preferred option comprises a southern bypass, the Orange Option, plus a package of improvements to local transport to tackle local congestion in the town. I attach a copy of the Statement of Results and also a copy of the Preferred Route plan.

Currently construction of the 'Preferred Route' is programmed to start in late 2014/early 2015 with an anticipated two year construction period. I will however be prioritising the objectives of the National Transport Plan over the coming months, and will publish a rescheduled delivery plan this autumn.

Any major road scheme is subject to the Welsh Government obtaining statutory consent to do so. This means, we publish draft Orders and an Environmental Statement setting out the justification for the Scheme, identifying the land requirements, and assessing the impacts, which we would then mitigate wherever possible. As part of the statutory procedures, once we publish the draft Orders, we give the public and relevant bodies the opportunity to comment, support or object to the proposals. If there are objections then we hold a Public Local Inquiry before an Independent Inspector.

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Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

A483/A489 NEWTOWN STUDY

STATEMENT OF RESULTS FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION

OCTOBER 2010

**A483/A489 NEWTOWN STUDY
STATEMENT OF RESULTS
FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

AUGUST 2010

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2007 the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned a study to address the transport problems associated with the A483 and A489 through Newtown. As part of this study, public consultation took place in September 2009.
- 1.2 This Statement of Results summarises the scheme's technical, economic and environmental aspects and the views expressed during the public consultation. It also explains the Deputy First Minister's decision, acting in his capacity as Minister for the Economy and Transport.

2 DEVELOPMENT AND APPRAISAL OF OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Study placed specific emphasis on the social, economic and environmental, impacts.
- 2.2 The main issues raised by the study were:
- The existing road network is subject to significant congestion and delays, particularly at peak and tourist times or in an event of an accident.
 - Two existing railway bridges on the A483 and A489 in Newtown where bridge headrooms are less than 5.3m, preventing high-sided heavy goods vehicles from passing under.
 - A number of 'rat runs' have developed through housing estates as an alternative to the congested through roads.
 - There is a lack of crossing opportunity for north-south movements over the River Severn.
 - Gradual housing and commercial development will increase the demand on the existing road network.
 - There are limited commercial opportunities within Newtown and to the west.
 - The parallel nature of the River Severn, trunk road and railway line causes severance of the town.
 - Perceived diminished quality of life along the trunk road.
 - Lack of centralised public transport hub caused by separate railway and bus stations.
 - Perceived road safety issues along 'rat runs'.
 - Considerable number of accesses onto the trunk road.
 - Physical barriers preventing continuous pedestrian, cycling and other non-motorised users' links.
 - Air Quality issues particularly at the A483/A489 junction in Newtown.

- 2.3 The study used Welsh Transport Planning and Appraisal Guidance (WelTAG)¹ principles.
- 2.4 To address the problems raised, and in line with strategic network objectives, we identified Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs). We developed options in consultation with stakeholders, appraised how they performed against these objectives using WelTAG, and discarded those that did not perform well.
- 2.5 These options generally included a bypass proposal either as a stand alone scheme or combined with other improvements, with three exceptions. These other improvements were either off line highway improvements, on-line rail bridges, highway or traffic improvements or improvements to local transport, including cycling and public transport.
- 2.6 A northern bypass either on its own or in combination with other improvements was discarded as it did not satisfy all the TPOs.
- 2.7 On line bridge improvements were considered unacceptable to Network Rail and did not satisfy the TPOs.
- 2.8 A southern bypass in combination with online highway and traffic improvements or a southern bypass in combination with online highway and traffic improvements and local transport improvements satisfied all requirements.
- 2.10 The consultation brochure at Annex A describes the resulting options in more detail.
- 2.11 The Technical Appraisal Report² records the findings of the study in detail.

3 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 3.1 We consulted on three bypass routes; Orange, Brown, and Purple, in combination with improvements to public transport and non motorised users facilities, together with, as variants, the same options but including improvement of the existing A483/A489 trunk roads through Newtown. Consultation took place between 3 September and 24 November 2009.
- 3.2 1,403 people attended the exhibition and preview evening. We received 833 completed questionnaires and seven letters from individuals, interested groups, community councils and local authorities. The report on the consultation³ contains the details and a summary of the views expressed is given below.

¹ Welsh Transport Planning and Appraisal Guidance WelTAG, June 2009 – on our website

² A483/A489 Newtown Study – Technical Appraisal Report, (in two volumes), March 2010

³ A483/A489 Newtown Study - Report on September 2009 Public Consultation – on our website

4 ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

Analysis of Questionnaire responses

- 4.1 The questionnaire asked people about the need for improvement, what was most important to them and their option preference. Analysis of the responses to the nine questions is as follows.

Question 1 - Do you consider that the flow of traffic through Newtown needs to be improved?

96% of questionnaire respondents supported the proposal; 2% against; 2% did not express an opinion

Question 2 - What do you think are the current problems on this section of the A483/A489 trunk road through Newtown?

Based upon an analysis of the responses the current problems were put in the following descending order of importance:

- (b) Congestion of traffic through Newtown
- (h) Other - 103 respondents highlighted other current problems. Typical additional problems highlighted were; Poor synchronisation of the traffic lights on the network causing disjointed flows; Pollution; HGVs using back roads such as Plantation Lane; Speeds too high and unsafe for cycling
- (a) Poor safety for pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists
- (d) Community severance effects caused by traffic
- (e) Traffic noise or vibration effects
- (c) Poor public transport reliability
- (g) Inappropriate use of local roads by vehicular traffic (rat running)
- (f) Limited right turn facilities

Question 3 – Do you consider that there should be a bypass to Newtown?

91 % indicated support, 7 % were against the idea and 2% did not express an opinion.

Question 4 – If you do not consider a bypass is necessary, please suggest an alternative solution to the problems

66 respondents suggested an alternative was necessary. Typical of the alternative solutions suggested were; Sort out the traffic lights and assess the effect before making any decisions; Re-education of the populace to walk, cycle and use buses with incentives/facilities such as buses to the industrial sites; Replace traffic signals with roundabouts; Reduce school traffic by provision of better buses and cycle paths

Question 5 – For the section between A489 Llanidloes Road and A483 Dolfor road, which option on the brochure map do you prefer if a bypass were part of the solution?

Orange	77%
Brown	13%
Purple	6%
No preference expressed	4%

Question 6 - Which additional works with your choice of bypass option would you see as beneficial to Newtown and the surrounding area?

The response to this question ranked these additional works in the order given below.

- b) Improved train service on the Cambrian line (54%)
- c) On-line improvements to Llanidloes Road (53%)
- d) On-line improvements to New Road (52%)
- e) On-line improvements to Pool Road (52%)
- f) Footway improvements to Llanidloes Road, New Road and Pool Road (45%)
- a) Improved bus services (45%)
- h) Improved pedestrian and cycle links across the River Severn (41%)
- g) Improved pedestrian and cycle links across the Cambrian railway (36%)
- i) Improved access to the railway station (36%)

91 respondents proposed a number of additional items of work to be included with the main works, examples of which are: Footpaths under the railway bridges; local on-line improvements and improvements to the pavements; footpath along Canal Road by Tan y Graig; cycle paths in and around Newtown

Question 7 - Which to you would be the most important factor in choosing an option?

The response to this question ranked these additional works in the order given below.

- (f) Removal of through traffic from Newtown (73%)
- (e) Reducing traffic in communities (12%)
- (a) Impact on residential property (10%)
- (h) Improved facilities for non-motorised (6%) users
- (b) Impact on landscape (5%)
- (c) Impact on farms and businesses (5%)
- (d) Protection of wildlife (4%)
- (g) Cost (3%)

Some 34 respondents proposed additional factors that should be considered when choosing an option. Typical examples of the additional factors were: Impact on Cedewain special school and its facilities; improving the through traffic flow; reduction in pollution

Question 8 - Which of the following best describes your interest in the scheme?

- Resident of Newtown (64%)
- Local resident (e.g. Kerry, Caersws, or other communities near the route) (24%)
- Landowner through which one of the routes would pass (3%)
- Regular user of the A483/A489 (71%)
- Tourist or a visitor to the area(3%)

Other: 112 respondents added comments about their interest in the scheme. A sample of the comments are : Connections with Cedewain school with a child there, teacher, support worker and governor; factory and or a service based in Newtown; owner of a static caravan in the Glandulas Caravan Holiday Park

Question 9 - Please add any other comments you may have or provide reasons for your choice

426 respondents added comments to justify their decision. Additional comments on the options and the problems within Newtown were also aired.

The main themes of the comments were:

1. The Purple option is too close to Cedewain School
2. Congestion and traffic delays on the existing roads
3. Purple option as it minimises the amount of farmland used and land that will become part of Newtown if the Orange option is chosen
4. Brown option because it causes less harm to residents and businesses
5. Orange because it takes the new road out of residential areas
6. Orange option needs a connection into Mochdre Industrial Estate
7. Use of Plantation Lane by heavy goods vehicles
8. The bypass is overdue and the existing situation makes Newtown a place to be avoided
9. Keep traffic out of Mochdre Industrial Estate. It would also make access between units difficult.
10. Incentives to walk, cycle, use bus and car share would be more effective.
11. Orange option takes traffic from town centre
12. Bypass should be a dual carriageway
13. There is damage to the economic well being of Mid Wales due to the bottleneck in Newtown.
14. Brown option would have the least effect on the countryside
15. Consideration should be given to a passing lane to ease flows and cater for increase in traffic.

Community and County Council Views

- 4.2 **Mochdre with Pentrowed Community Councils** agreed that the traffic flow through Newtown needed to be improved. They considered that the congestion was the most significant problem followed by the inappropriate use of local roads by vehicular traffic with limited right turn facilities as the third problem. They supported a bypass; either the Orange or the Brown options. They also supported the Variant 1 proposals including improvement of the Cambrian line services.
- 4.3 **Newtown and District Civic Society** agreed that the traffic flow through Newtown needed to be improved. They considered that the congestion was the most significant problem followed by poor safety for pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists. The inappropriate use of local roads by vehicular traffic was the third problem. They supported the Orange bypass option. They also supported the Variant 1 proposals including improvement of the Cambrian line services. They proposed that there should be a link from the bypass into Mochdre Industrial Estate. They expressed concern at the closeness of the Orange bypass option to the earthworks close to Castell y Dail farmhouse. Their final comment concerned the lack of obvious overtaking opportunities on the adjoining network and that the bypass was a chance to provide this facility.

- 4.4 **Powys County Council (PCC)** supported the need for a bypass to Newtown and considered that the Orange option with Variant 1 was most appropriate. They drew attention to the lack of obvious overtaking opportunities on the adjoining network and that the bypass was a chance to provide this facility, possibly using a 2+1 layout. They proposed that there should be a link from the bypass and A483 Dolfor Road into Mochdre Industrial Estate. PCC considered that the Brown option would have too many accesses and pedestrian movements even when the existing accesses were optimised. The Purple option, whilst following the current protected line, was considered to be too close to residential properties and the special needs school Ysgol Cedewain. PCC also supported enhancement of public transport facilities.
- 4.5 **Powys County Council Countryside Services** highlighted the need to maintain the non-motorised user routes.

Non Statutory Bodies

- 4.6 **Countryside Council for Wales** were content that the description of the baseline environment has been considered in adequate detail to give a balanced view of the baseline conditions and the potential impacts of the three bypass options. They considered that the Orange option was the least preferred option. They highlighted the environmental and ecological sensitivity of the area around Mochdre Brook.
- 4.7 **Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust** submitted a letter and plan showing two woodland habitats that are of interest to them. These are both close to the Orange Bypass option.
- 4.8 **Defence Estates Safeguarding** confirmed that the area was outside the Ministry of Defence safeguarding areas.
- 4.9 **Ysgol Cedewain** Governors accepted that Newtown required a bypass and supported the Orange option, but also expressed their concern at the impact on Ysgol Cedewain if the Purple option was adopted.
- 4.10 **SUSTRANS** did not support any bypass option but did support the local transport improvements. They included details of further improvements they would wish to see and queried the need for widening the existing A483/A489 at a number of locations.
- 4.11 **Farmers' Union of Wales** supported the need for a bypass with the Orange option being preferred. They felt that the closeness of the existing traffic signals prevented traffic clearing properly and was a problem.

5 OUTCOMES

The public consultation process was considered effective in terms of attendance at the exhibition and the number of returned questionnaires and written responses.

There was clear support for improvements to the traffic flow through Newtown with strong support for a bypass. There was also support for the improvement of the local transport facilities within Newtown.

There was also support for localised improvements to the existing trunk roads to improve footways and provide cycleways and additional right turning facilities.

Actions Taken Following Concerns Raised During Public Consultation

We listened carefully to the views expressed and carried out some further work, described below:

(a) Changes of Use within Mochdre Industrial Estate

We have investigated the possible implications on generated traffic that may result from possible changes of use within the Mochdre Industrial Estate to retail. This showed that there would be an increase in traffic using the Coleg Powys roundabout. We would have to look more closely at the economic implications of this in the next stage of design.

(b) Inclusion of a link from the Proposed Bypass Route to the Mochdre Industrial Estate (Heol Ashley)

The Orange Bypass Route could be designed to accommodate a link to the Eastern end of the Mochdre Industrial Estate. This results in a slight reduction in traffic using this route between the A489 and A483 trunk roads. We would consider this in more detail at the next stage of design.

(c) Provision of Wide Single 2+1 Carriageway

We are satisfied that we could design the Orange Bypass Route to incorporate lengths of Wide Single 2+1 carriageway to increase the amount of overtaking available on the route. We would consider this in more detail at the next stage of design.

(d) Proposed Extension of the Glandulas Caravan Park

We have considered the implications of the proposed extension of the Glandulas Caravan Park on the Orange Route. We would consider this in more detail at the next stage of design.

6 REASONS FOR SELECTING THE PREFERRED OPTION

- 6.1 There is significant support for an improvement to the traffic flow through Newtown, demonstrated by the overall support received for improving the traffic flow and for the provision of a bypass with the local transport measures.
- 6.2 Over three quarters of the respondents supported the Orange option for a Bypass. 13% supported the Brown option and 6% supported the Purple option.

6.3 There is significant support for the on-line and local transport improvement works and the improvement to services on the Cambrian Railway. The Preferred Option proposals are shown on the Plan in Annex B.

7 DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER'S DECISION

7.1 Having taken into account the technical, social, economic and environmental aspects of this scheme and the outcome of the public consultation, the Deputy First Minister has decided to:

- Adopt the Orange Bypass Route together with local transport improvement measures within Newtown and on-line improvements of the A483 and A489 within Newtown as the Preferred Option to address the transport problems identified in the A483/A489 Newtown study;
- Publish a TR111 Plan (Annex C) to protect the entire Orange Bypass Route for planning purposes.

7.2 The TR111 shows the Preferred Route as a broad black line. This is indicative only and may change during the next stage of design.

8 PROTECTION OF THE PREFERRED ROUTE

8.1 By publishing a TR111 plan, we protect the route under the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995. This means that the Local Planning Authority will refer to the Welsh Assembly Government all future planning applications that are near the Preferred Route. You may inspect the TR111 plan at Newtown, Ladywell House, at Powys County Council, County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, and at our Offices in Cathays Park, Cardiff.

8.2 In certain circumstances, any owner having difficulty selling property on the line of the route may apply for blight. If any case meets set criteria, we will purchase the property.

8.3 The protection of a Preferred Route does not commit us to the line of that route. We are only committed once the Line Order is made, described in the next section.

9 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

9.1 We will investigate further and design the scheme in more detail – known as Preliminary Design. In particular, we will be looking at the environmental and engineering issues in more detail, taking account of the comments made during consultation and looking at a junction strategy and options for side roads and accesses.

9.2 After Preliminary Design, the next key stage is publication of draft Orders under the Highways Act 1980 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981. The draft Orders comprise the powers to establish a line, modify the side roads, purchase land and put in place any other rights we need to deliver the scheme. There will be a period during which people who have an interest in, or might be affected by the proposals may object to the draft Orders and even suggest alternative proposals. If we cannot resolve these

objections, and depending on the issues raised and the weight of objection, we may hold a Public Local Inquiry. An independent Inspector would hear and consider the evidence and make a recommendation for the Deputy First Minister to take into account when deciding whether to make the Orders.

- 9.3 The scheme is a “relevant project” under Regulation 48 (1) (a) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994 (SI 1994/No 2716) in relation to Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. This means that we will carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment and produce an Environmental Statement. We will publish this at the same time we publish draft Orders.

ANNEX A

PUBLIC CONSULTATION BROCHURE AND QUESTIONNAIRE

ANNEX B

PREFERRED OPTION PLAN

ANNEX C

PREFERRED ROUTE PLAN - TR111

